

Book reviews

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Book Reviews

AMEY, PATRICK (2009): *La parole à la television. Les dispositifs des talk shows*. Paris: Coll. Communication et Civilisation.

Adottando un approccio di analisi micro e macro, il libro si pone l'obiettivo di ripercorrere in maniera interdisciplinare il valore euristico del termine «dispositivo». In particolare, soffermandosi su tale concetto in ambito televisivo, l'autore del libro, Patrick Amey, studia l'evoluzione e i cambiamenti della messa in scena dei «dispositivi» nelle trasmissioni televisive francesi.

Alla base di questo studio numerose sono le domande di ricerca, come le seguenti: come è possibile operationalizzare la nozione di dispositivo per misurare le trasformazioni dei registri linguistici e del trattamento della parola nelle trasmissioni televisive? Qual è stata l'evoluzione nell'ultimo ventennio dei modi di inquadratura e di messa in scena della parola? Quali sono i fattori contestuali, ossia politici e socio-economici, che possono aiutare a spiegare il predominio o il declino di un format, come l'intervista e il dibattito?

L'autore risponde a tutte queste domande in maniera precisa e puntuale, utilizzando una duplice prospettiva: sincronica e diacronica. Nella prima parte del libro, con una prospettiva sincronica, Patrick Amey ripercorre l'evoluzione del concetto di «dispositivo televisivo», per

fornire tutti quegli elementi necessari a tener conto dei contesti esterni alla produzione delle trasmissioni (come l'economia dell'audiovisivo), la cd. discorsività televisiva che si pone ai margini dell'emissione della parola e dei contesti situazionali (gli studi, gli attori, la sequenzialità).

Nella seconda parte, l'autore adottando una prospettiva diacronica prende in considerazione delle tipologie di «dispositivi» che hanno segnato la rottura o la nascita di programmi nel paesaggio televisivo francese dal 1980 al 2007.

Dalla fine degli anni '80, il paesaggio audiovisivo francese ha visto nascere una moltitudine di trasmissioni di parola: *reality-show*, dibattiti con partecipazione del pubblico e *talk-show* in tutte le loro sfaccettature. Tutte queste trasmissioni hanno un punto in comune: sono configurate appunto da «dispositivi» televisivi che inquadrano gli scambi, strutturano la scenografia dei palcoscenici e attribuiscono posture enunciative agli attori.

In che modo allora si sono evolute le messe in scena di tali trasmissioni e in che contesti sociali e politici si sono inseriti? Cosa le distingue e che cosa le accomuna?

Le trasmissioni politiche, i *reality-show*, le numerose varianti dei *talk-show* non sono intese come «proto-generi», né come generi che nascono dal nulla (*ex nihilo*), ma come delle forme organizzate della rappresentazione e della configurazione dei rapporti sociali e politici che intrattengono le persone.

Più precisamente in maniera molto dettagliata e approfondita l'autore mette in luce l'uso differente dei registri utilizzati nelle trasmissioni televisive come *la parola del rito della messa in scena di «sè»* nelle trasmissioni d'intervista o d'intrattenimento politico, *la parola conflittuale e dissensuale dei talk-show polemici* che privilegiano delle interazioni polemizzanti fra attori selezionati sulla base della tipicità del loro profilo e del loro statuto (accusati vs. vittime, fautori vs. detrattori di una causa, ecc) e *la parola deliberativa o declamativa dei forum e dei dibattiti con la partecipazione del pubblico*. E ancora egli indaga *la parola consensuale dei talk-show profani e dei reality-show* che privilegiano rispettivamente la narrazione delle esperienze di vita e le confessioni intime dei telespettatori e infine *la parola ornamentale e ricreativa dei talk-show* e delle trasmissioni d'infotainment che, stanchi del format «conversazione», mettono in scena delle personalità dello *show-business*, dei politici e dei giornalisti-presentatori che effettuano performance d'attore. L'uso di tutti questi registri differenti viene esemplificato facendo riferimento alle trasmissioni televisive francesi. Da tenere presente che la Francia è erede di una tradizione culturale in cui il discorso d'autorità è ancora vivido: non stupisce quindi il fatto che la televisione abbia accordato a lungo un diritto di espressione quasi censitario agli intellettuali, ai giornalisti, agli esperti e ai politici.

Per tutti questi aspetti, il volume rappresenta un utile strumento per l'approfondimento e la ricerca in vista di nuovi studi sul tema; studi decisamente necessari visto la rapidità con la quale si sviluppano nuovi generi televisivi e nuove commistioni di genere nel panorama tele-

visivo francese e più in generale europeo in costante evoluzione.

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VERBECK-LIETZ, STEFANIE (2010). *Kommunikationstheorien in Frankreich. Der epistemologische Diskurs der Sciences de l'information et de la communication (SIC) 1975–2005*. Berlin: AVINUS Verlag.

Kommunikationstheorien in Frankreich. Der epistemologische Diskurs der Sciences de l'information et de la communication (SIC) is not only an introduction to, but a thorough and detailed overview of communication theories in France. Written by Stefanie Averbek-Lietz, professor at the Institute for Communication and Media Science of the University of Leipzig, the book is a synopsis of developments in the field of communication sciences within the French-speaking research community throughout the last 30 years.

In the introductory chapter, the author explicitly mentions that the text is not intended to be a comparative study, however the fact that she continuously refers to the evolution and development of communication sciences in Germany (and the Anglo-Saxon world in general) clues the reader into standout differences in French research and why they exist.

Averbek-Lietz traces the history of French Information and Communication Sciences (or SIC as the discipline is referred to) since its institutionalization in 1975.

The epistemology of communication sciences isn't exclusively analyzed as an isolated research domain, but rather within the frame of social sciences in France and Germany with a focus on communication sciences, referring to chief contributing researchers in the field.

The analysis focuses on a branch of research which developed quite differently in neighboring countries France and Germany. Averbeck-Lietz stresses that her aim was twofold, as she analyzed the history of theories and then systemized the theories, a hefty challenge especially from a methodological point of view. Combining these two methodological approaches (the historical and the systematic approach) and adding a comparative frame generated an extremely rich and complete epistemological overview of French Information and Communication Sciences (which is a direct translation of the French term *sciences de l'information et de communication* and its acronym *SIC*).

At the center of interest is the evolution of the study of communication sciences over time and especially the ideological content of French Information and Communication Sciences. In the same time, Averbeck-Lietz also takes into account the social representation of the French Information and Communication Sciences (*SIC*) as well as the institutionalization of this branch of social sciences. The author describes her work as epistemological discourse, a term reflecting the dynamic of the field. It is important to reflect on the discipline in order to understand its origins and to further advance the field. Self-reflection is presented as crucial to development. Within a scientific discipline, it is impor-

tant that researchers not only discuss but also reflect on their research topics, content, hypothesis, research objects, theory and methods to eventually find a (self) definition of the field.

The goal of the book is threefold: Averbeck-Lietz wants to trace the content and research focus of the French Information and Communication Sciences (*SIC*) (1), she analyzes the social representation of the *SIC* (2) and finally the epistemological discourse of *SIC* about itself (3).

In the first chapter Averbeck-Lietz explains the foundations on which her analysis lies. Defining the notion of epistemology on which she builds the analysis to follow, she explains the general model of evolutionary science. Definitions are given, and her methodology explained.

In the second chapter, starting from the evolutionary model, she develops a "phase model" of the French Information and Communication Sciences. This chapter serves to lay groundwork on the evolution and history of social sciences, particularly in France. At this point, important central personalities in the field are introduced, such as founder of the *Bordeaux School* Robert Escarpit. The challenge Averbeck-Lietz deals with is linking the history of institutional evolution with key roles of principle researchers of the field. Thus she introduces the French Information and Communication Sciences' (*SIC*) forerunner institution (the centre of mass communication) together with the founding fathers of *SIC*, for instance Roland Barthes, Georges Friedmann and Edgar Morin – all from differing research fields such as linguistics, semiotics, sociology and philosophy.

The third chapter provides greater detail about the content of information and communication sciences in France (and Germany, as the author continuously compares the two neighbors), tracing and systemizing 30 years of epistemological discourse. The underlying criteria – especially related to the understanding and interpretation of notions of “communication” – are partially compared to those existing in the German communication science community.

The final chapter is a synthesis of the two previous chapters. Here, Averbeck-Lietz outlines why the research of French Information and Communication Sciences differs so greatly from the German mass communication tradition. The main reason lies in the fact that the origins of French Communication Sciences are found in linguistics, semiotics, pragmatism and social constructivism which is much different to German communication science with its mass orientation focus. Averbeck-Lietz clarifies the evolution of French Information and Communication Sciences from a semi-pragmatic approach to a social-constructivist approach.

In the introduction, Averbeck-Lietz stresses that in French the term *science(s)* is always used in plural. Thus it is not as in German *Communication Science* but *Communication Sciences*. This is not only a linguistic hazard, but can be reasoned epistemologically and historically. While in France SIC evolved from different disciplines which are still integral components of the research domain, the German national communication association has never had a subdivision of *Semiotics*.¹ It is simply not part of Communication Science for German-speaking researchers.

Aside from delivering a complete and detailed overview of French Information and Communications Sciences (SIC), Averbeck-Lietz's aim is also to try to reveal reasons why French and German (even Anglo-Saxon) researchers perceive each other only marginally on a scientific level. The degree of ignorance across national boundaries arrives with two different theoretical traditions: the Romano and Anglo-Saxon. Here Averbeck-Lietz refers to research in Switzerland, demonstrating that communication research varies greatly across language borders even within the same country. Communication science in the Swiss French, Swiss Italian and Swiss German parts of Switzerland are embedded in the different scientific traditions of its neighbors: Italian, French and German epistemology of communication science(s). Hence the lacking cross-cultural communication about scientific findings result from historically different self-conceptions in the research field. While Germany lacks a segment on semiotics in the national communication association (as its not considered part of the field) in French the terms *public communication* and *Publizistik* do not exist. The closest translation to the term *Publizistik* is the term *journalism*. This is interestingly also the case in English and could be further explored from an epistemological and linguistic point of view.

Though her analysis is based on a thoroughly defined methodology, the

¹ Note that in 2008 the subdivision *Media language* has been newly created with the task to put linguistic media research hitherto integrated in the Society for Applied Linguistics (cf. <http://www.dgpuk.de/index.cfm?id=4001> [16.07.2010]).

frequent use of French terminology in the book creates barriers for readers with a low proficiency in French language. This is regrettable as Averbeck-Lietz' work is highly interesting and could serve to build bridges between the French and Anglo-Saxon scientific worlds, as described so precisely during her argumentation. Though she wraps up her methodology chapter explaining why she decided against translating certain terms, quotes and institutions, for this reason an extremely well-written and highly interesting book will remain accessible only to a very limited readership: Scientifics with a high proficiency in German and French languages. Not knowing French at all or at an insufficient level would rob the book of its intrigue, quality and message. While claiming the lack of scientific exchange between France and Germany, the latter deeply embedded in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the book written either exclusively in French or in German or in English and hence accessible to a much larger scientific community could become a keystone to igniting scientific exchange between the two worlds.

For readers with a high level of proficiency in French and German, this book provides an excellent summary of the fundamental differences between the two schools. It is well-written, enriched with interesting quotes, and offers a vast selection of further literature to allow the reader to reflect on what actually is or should be an integral part of social and communication sciences.

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KAYE, JEFF & QUINN, STEPHEN (2010). *Funding Journalism in the Digital Age: Business Models, Strategies, Issues and Trends*. New York et al.: Peter Lang.

As the traditional business model for journalism no longer works, the publishing industry, Internet start-ups and consultants search for new ways to support newsrooms without depending on advertising revenue. The "trial and error" initiatives accompanying this process have since become difficult to overlook.

In their latest book, Jeff Kaye and Stephen Quinn provide an overview, presenting the most-discussed potential financing models – among them partnerships of media companies with giants like Google and Yahoo, adjusting news websites to search engines in order to reel in readers, and the increasing focus on hyper-local news content. Also included are experiments such as "dayparting" – attempting to reach new groups of online consumers by adapting content to the daily information-seeking patterns of users.

Micropayments are presented as crowdfunding projects aiming to finance journalism as well as voluntary contributions. The initiatives of select philanthropist-millionaires (like ProPublica funders Herbert and Marion Sandler) may help investigative journalism survive in the Internet age, as would billions of "endowment dollars" needed to continuously finance newsrooms like the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* from the dividends of a capital stock.

Kaye has extensive experience working as a journalist, media consultant and academic in the U.S. and Great Britain.

Quinn is a journalism professor in Australia and spent more than two decades as a journalist in the United Kingdom and Australia. He recently took a sabbatical at Stanford University in California. The authors' pooled competence allows for an informed overview, albeit partially superficial. Sources are mentioned, but frequently not well documented, and many elements simply can't be tapped into in only 177 pages.

The main drawback of the book is its focus on the anglophone world. Certainly, this is where the music plays (mostly), as many of the Internet's innovations still arrive from the U.S. and the print media crisis has reached more dramatic dimensions there. Yet interesting business models have been developed in other language areas, for example in Scandinavia, as well as in Italy and Spain (collateral products like books, CDs and videos). Such aspects have been somewhat neglected by the authors.

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MEIER, STEFAN (2008). (Bild-)Diskurs im Netz. Konzept und Methode für eine semiotische Diskursanalyse im World Wide Web. Köln: Herbert von Halem.

Dans le champ de la communication et des médias, la recherche sur la communication *online* est encore un domaine relativement nouveau et c'est pour cette raison que jusqu'à présent il n'existe pas encore de méthode d'analyse qui se soit

imposée. La raison est sans doute que les démarches existantes analysent souvent un seul élément spécifique de la communication *online*, souvent séparé de son contexte. Stefan Meier nous propose dans son ouvrage une approche holistique qui permet d'analyser de façon plus complète la communication *online* en focalisant sur trois éléments centraux: l'hypertexte, l'intertextualité et la multimédialité. Meier mène son analyse en utilisant les outils de la sémiotique à propos du site consacré à une exposition de la Wehrmacht à Hambourg.

L'ouvrage se divise en deux grandes parties. La première traite des concepts. Meier commence avec une introduction à la théorie du discours de Foucault et continue avec une présentation panoramique des concepts divers de l'analyse de discours. Dans la section suivante, l'auteur fait une synthèse de ces concepts en formulant des questions transdisciplinaires à propos du discours *online* dans lesquelles il soulève trois points centraux: premièrement, la constitution discursive du savoir collectif, deuxièmement, les acteurs, leur image et leurs rôles d'interaction et troisièmement, l'intertextualité des objets communicationnels. Ensuite, Meier enchaîne sur les signes dans leur usage au sein d'un discours multimodal et présente les liens et les rapports entre les images, les textes et le *webdesign* pour expliquer le fonctionnement de la communication *online*.

La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage traite de la méthodologie, de la méthode et des analyses. Comme Meier le précise lui-même, l'accent de son travail est mis sur cette partie méthodologique théorique pour pouvoir focaliser sur la complexité

des signes qui sont codés de façon multiple dans le discours *online*. C'est surtout l'approche socio-sémiotique qui permet de systématiser tout ce qui est de l'ordre de la communication visuelle comme le design, la typographie etc. Puis, Meier explique aussi comment il intègre les concepts sémiotiques dans des approches discursives. Pour pouvoir expliquer de quelle manière concrètement les objets communicationnels multimodaux fonctionnent à un niveau micro, c'est à dire dans les discours individuels et interpersonnels, et à un niveau macro, c'est-à-dire dans le discours sociétal, il développe comme élément unifiant le concept de la multimodalité.

Enfin, pour pratiquer l'analyse de discours sémiotique, Meier propose les cinq niveaux suivants: des modèles de signification langagiers et visuels, la symbolique et les schémas d'interprétation collectifs, les modèles de liens intertextuels, les modèles stylistiques, et enfin les modèles de comportements suggérés par les images. Meier souligne également à plusieurs reprises que l'acte communicatif dans le web prend une forme autant visuelle que langagière. L'évocation des concepts de «cohésion» qui concerne le design et de «cohérence» qui vise le contenu permet de saisir les rapports entre ces divers éléments sur les sites web.

L'avant dernier chapitre traite du choix et de la récolte des données. Meier insiste sur le fait qu'une récolte de données sur Internet demande d'autres processus d'enquête et de sauvegarde. Il explique en détail les différences entre le traitement d'un discours *online* et celui d'un discours issu des médias classiques. En outre, Meier développe une typologie des sites web intéressante qui

sert à différencier leurs fonctions communicatives. Il distingue des sites web avec une priorité «news», une priorité «image», une priorité «campagne» au sens d'action et une priorité «plateforme». Mais comme cette typologie est développée à partir de son corpus spécifique et vu que les pratiques du web sont dynamiques, une application potentielle sur d'autres discours en ligne reste encore à prouver.

A la fin, Meier présente l'analyse du discours en ligne de l'exposition de la Wehrmacht qui se limite avec ses 48 pages à une part relativement petite de l'ouvrage – comparativement aux 446 pages du tout.

Ce livre n'est pas d'un abord très facile et ne doit pas être considéré comme une introduction à l'analyse de discours. Néanmoins, c'est un livre important pour la recherche dans le domaine des médias et du web. Un des aspects les plus intéressants est certainement l'approche qui consiste à ne pas observer et analyser les formes esthétiques et langagières séparément, mais comme un ensemble. La combinaison des approches discursives avec des éléments de sémiotique paraît tout à fait adaptée pour résoudre les problèmes qui se posent dans l'analyse des discours en ligne.

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WEINACHT, STEFAN (2009): *Medienmarketing im Redaktionellen. Medienthematisierungen als Instrument der Unternehmenskommunikation von Medienorganisationen*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Are newsrooms covering their own media companies like public relations professionals instead of journalists? German media researcher Stefan Weinacht raised this question, discovering frightening facts. Of course it's obvious that most of the "old media," i.e. print, radio and TV, have reduced their coverage of journalism and the media to the inevitable minimum. Weinacht, however, took a closer look at what remains. The researcher's intention was to find out whether media companies use their own editorial space in order to rouse (or distract) public interest in their own activities – hence, whether media outlets can steer the ways in which they're perceived by third parties.

Weinacht's initial suspicion – that many newsrooms compliantly serve as extended arms of their PR departments – is confirmed. Marketing considerations have grown influential in the coverage of media due to the fact that in this constellation, a media company is just as much the source of a news story as it is the gatekeeper presiding over news selection and presentation. Even worse, in Germany public broadcasters ARD and ZDF, both continuously claiming a high level of journalistic quality, now surpass their private competitors in self-adulation.

Weinacht's research is based on several huge data sets in which the German TV news as well as the political and business sections of the most important

newspapers were evaluated. Additionally, different modes of agenda-setting by the tabloid press and subscription papers were analyzed. The study confirms that if media outlets report about media at all, they predominantly cover themselves. "Compared to private competitors, the public broadcasting news pays more attention to the question of which television provider will become a topic of the news," says Weinacht. "This can be interpreted as a stronger competitive behavior of public broadcasters on the TV market."

Among the German publishing houses, "the share of self-coverage in their own media" is also higher than the "share of coverage they receive in other media." In this respect, big publishers like Axel Springer, Gruner+Jahr, as well as *Der Spiegel* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* sin more regularly than the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and regional newspapers. The same picture is painted with regard to the positioning of news stories. Stories about parent companies receive privileged treatment. In particular, media provide more *good news* about their own companies than other media.

Summarizing, Weinacht states that newsrooms provide "media marketing light." Meaning, "If newsrooms cover the media, they do so not free of self-interest of the media companies to which they belong. However, they are not dominated by the interests of corporate communication." This is a surprisingly mild and diplomatic interpretation of his own research – which can perhaps be explained by the fact that the study is a Ph.D. dissertation, conducted by a candidate who preferred not to expose himself too much. Sharpening somewhat in

the evaluation of data provided, it might rather be said that the self-adulation of media can be perceived as irritating – at least whenever educated and demanding publics are addressed. Perhaps the rapid decline of television news credibility can be partially attributed to the fact that at the very least, intelligent viewers do realize how often *Tageschau* and *heute* create one-sided newscasts for PR and propaganda purposes in favor of their own houses.

As a side note, PR executives of large media houses like the ZDF and Springer AG in Germany and tamedia and Ringier in Switzerland agree that distributing PR for their own institutions occurs without any “stage direction” from above. According to the PR executives, newsrooms decide which press releases they pick up. Edda Fels, Head of Corporate Communications at Springer for many years, goes one step further. For her, “journalistic credibility of the newsrooms is a most valuable asset.” To protect the “home” journalists from a potential conflict of interest, interviews with CEOs and other top managers of the company are only granted to journalists from the outside. “From our point of view,” she says, “we are thus renouncing important media which contribute to shaping public opinion for our PR. However, there are news items dealing with business issues related to our house, important changes in personnel or acquisitions which the newsrooms cannot withhold from their readers. In such cases, our newsrooms pick up the reports from the news agencies.”

Ms. Fels concedes that newsrooms of high-quality media damage credibility by using biased reports on media rather

than applying the usual journalistic standards of disinterestedness. To the contrary, Alexander Stock, responsible for the communication of the German public TV outlet ZDF, claims bluntly, “Our newsrooms don’t make themselves into loudspeakers of corporate communication.” Weinacht’s results, however, speak a different language. Seen from outside, one can only wonder how many newsrooms enslave themselves with anticipatory obedience, becoming promoters of PR for their own houses without anyone explicitly demanding such behavior from them.

Top managers in publishing houses and broadcasting who’ve developed their communication departments in the last years while reducing media journalism at the same time are obviously resistant to the insight that successful media relations require independent, serious journalistic platforms and critical journalists as counterparts.

Leading PR executives of the Swiss media indirectly confirm this analysis. Marco Castellaneta, Head of Corporate Communications at Ringier until recently, states, “internal communication has exceeded media relations in terms of its importance.” He views this as “a consequence of the cutbacks of media journalism.” According to Castellaneta, developments of the media branch are now only partially covered. “Media journalism is much too little a critical companion,” he says. If there’s journalistic observation at all, the newsrooms of competing houses treat one another skeptically. “In a saturated market the platform of the competitor is useless for one’s own corporate communication.” Though practices of corporate communication in

media companies are changing rapidly, it remains to Weinacht's merit that – based on empirical data for the first time – he's shed light on one of journalism's taboo zones.

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